G-21,164
S-2 NOV 23 1967

STAT

A Unique Group Irks Anybody To Free POC's

By CAROLYN LEWIS
Times-Post, News Service
(Washington Post)

WASHINGTON — . . . They suspect the Central Intelligence Agency is trying to infiltrate their organization, and are certain they're being watched by agents of Communist governments.

. . . . They've been politely expelled from some of the best embassies, and impolitely tossed out of the most exotic nooks and crannies of the world.

Which often leads members of Amnesty International to ask — what's a nice group like us doing in a job like this?

Housewives, businessmen, students, clergymen, lawyers, tradesmen and retired people, they form a most unlikely composite of citizens to be embroiled in spy-style imbroglios.

But by its very nature — an organization dedicated to seeking the release of prisoners of conscience on both sides of the Iron Curtain and in uncommitted countries —Amnesty is bound to attract the curiosity and attention of intelligence agents of sundry political shades and colors.

As proof, organization officials cite the occasion when their London office was broken into, and their central file of cases professionally rifled.

The file of prisoners, called POC's (prisoners of conscience), contains detailed information about some 7,000 people who have been imprisoned for their political or religious beliefs. Much of the information would be considered classified in their countries of origin, or, at the least, delicate.

For example, the case of Mihajlo Mihajlov, imprisoned in Yugoslavia because he tried to set up an independent Communist journal, is a source of continued embarrassment to the Yugoslavs, who claim that theirs is the "freest" of all the Communist countries.

Staff members at the Kenyan Embassy jump nervously at mention of the case of Caroline Okello-Odongo.

American-born, Howard University-educated, Mrs. Okello-Odongo was private secretary to ousted Kenyan Vice President Oginga Odinga. She was imprisoned in 1966 under an emergency security law, and has not been heard from since.